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ABSTRACT

The New Standards Project, a joint program of the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education and the Economy, is working to set very high, voluntary national education standards for all students and to create a performance-based examination system. Approximately 20 states and 6 urban school districts participate in the project. This document presents findings of a study conducted by Public Agenda, which examined public response to the program. Data were obtained through 24 focus groups in 3 New Standards sites--Seattle (Washington); Rochester (New York); and the state of Kentucky. The groups were composed of teachers, students, parents, and members of the general public. Section A reviews focus group reactions, both positive and negative, to the project and suggests responses to those reactions. Section B examines "process" problems and how to manage them. Special problem areas, which involve intense substantive concerns, are discussed in section C. Section D presents 11 tips for communicating with the public, and section E reviews some recurring questions that people ask about the project. The final section summarizes the project's salient points. Appendices contain selected survey data and a list of related material and publications from Public Agenda. (LMI)

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